



SBE Meeting Highlights

A summary of key actions by the California State Board of Education November 2003

SBE: No Change in CAHSEE Passing Scores

The State Board of Education unanimously adopted a recommendation by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell to maintain the current passing scores at 60 percent of the items correct for English-language arts and at 55 percent of the items correct for mathematics on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

In June 2001, then Superintendent Delaine Eastin brought the results from the first standard setting to the SBE to set the CAHSEE passing scores for the Class of 2004. At that time, the standard setting results were based on the volunteer ninth graders who took the test for the first time in March 2001. The Superintendent recommended setting a provisional passing score at 60 percent of the items correct for English-language arts and at 55 percent of the items correct for mathematics.

The State Board adopted the Superintendent's recommendations and, in doing so, stated that the provisional passing scores would be re-evaluated within two years. That re-evaluation led to the November 2003 recommendation by Superintendent O'Connell to maintain the current passing scores.

Earlier this year, in July 2003, the State Board approved Superintendent O'Connell's recommendation that the requirement to pass the CAHSEE as a condition of graduation be postponed two years to the high school class of 2006. (That recommendation was based on the findings of a study mandated by Assembly Bill 1609, which called for an independent evaluation of whether test development of the exit exam and standards-based instruction in the classroom were implemented appropriately for a high-stakes test.) The State Board also approved the Superintendent's recommendation to reduce the exit exam from three days to two by making the English-language arts portion of the test a one-day test instead of two.

A common practice for monitoring the validity and reliability of a high-stakes test is periodically reviewing the test blueprints to ensure that the test is measuring what it is intended to measure (the academic content standards in English-language arts and mathematics) and that the test questions are aligned with this content.

In that vein, the CDE presented revised blueprints to the State Board in July 2003 and the Board approved them at that time. As a result, the test contractor – Educational Testing Service or ETS -- aligned the measurement of the mathematics standards to be a more appropriate assessment of what the test is intending to measure. The items deleted from the blueprints were either redundant and were tested elsewhere on the CAHSEE or were found not to be suitable for multiple-choice exams.

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NCLB: SBE Again Amends Teacher Quality Regs

The State Board of Education unanimously approved further amendments to proposed permanent regulations that will guide implementation of the teacher requirements, also known as the “highly qualified” teacher provisions, of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The State Board also directed CDE staff to send out the amended proposed regulations for a 15-day public comment period. If no objections to the amendments are received, staff is to complete the rulemaking package, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, including the requirement to respond to public comments. In the event that a meeting is required to consider objections to the amendments, a special teleconference meeting of the State Board will be publicly noticed and held.

At its September meeting, the Board amended the proposed NCLB Teacher Requirement regulations based on public comments, and directed staff to send the amended regulations out for the 15-day public review period. Nine comments were received during the 15-day review period. Two of these comments were objections to the proposed September Board amendments and therefore the regulations were not sent to the Office of Administrative Law but were amended at the State Board’s November meeting.

Meanwhile, State Board and California Department of Education staff are completing work on a guide for school district compliance with NCLB’s teacher requirements. A draft of the 2003 NCLB Teacher Requirement Resource Guide is now posted on the Internet and is available at the following link: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nclb/>. (A final version of the Guide should be available in January 2004).

Under NCLB, all classrooms must have a teacher who meets NCLB’s teacher requirements by 2005-06 – a requirement that new hires at Title I schools must already meet. The federal law requires that all teachers demonstrate subject matter competency in the subject(s) they teach to meet these federal requirements.

In June 2003, the State Board approved a conceptual plan for compliance with NCLB’s teacher requirements, including the following highlights:

- All new teachers at the elementary school level will need to pass a rigorous subject matter test;
- Those entering the profession at the middle and high school level will need either a major or to pass a test in each subject they teach;
- Those “not new” to the profession will be able to satisfy NCLB’s requirements for demonstrating subject matter competence through an alternative evaluation process contained in NCLB – the “high objective uniform state standard of evaluation” or HOUSSE.

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NCLB: State Board Amends Reading First Plan

The State Board approved amendments to the California Reading First Plan in accordance with a new state law and directed staff to immediately transmit the amended Plan to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) for approval.

The new law, Assembly Bill 1485, will become operative January 1, 2004, and explicitly allows classrooms operating under the waiver provisions of Proposition 227 to participate in Reading First without the restriction that English learners receive a specified amount of time of instruction in English.

The portions of AB 1485 relating to the Reading First Program direct the State Board to send an amendment to the Reading First Plan to the USDE that would allow the use of approved alternate format *SRA Open Court Reading 2002* and Houghton Mifflin *A Legacy of Literacy 2003* in classes operating as Proposition 227 waiver classrooms. Currently the only approved alternate formats for these instructional materials are in Spanish, but AB 1485 also directs the SBE to determine if there is a demand for other translations. Until the amendment is approved by the USDE, AB 1485 would prohibit expenditure of the over \$13 million in additional Reading First funds California received for 2003-2004.

Once the amendment is approved, existing Reading First districts will be allowed to add Prop. 227 waiver classrooms using the approved alternate format instructional materials to their Reading First Program and their 2003-2004 grant amount will be increased accordingly. The process and application for these district program revisions will be developed shortly so that classrooms can be added as soon as the plan amendment is approved by the USDE. The process and application will be limited to ensuring that any new classrooms will adhere to the program assurances in California's Amended Reading First Plan.

The California Technical Assistance Center (C-TAC) and the Regional Technical Assistance Centers (R-TACs), which provide technical assistance to potential and existing Reading First LEAs, have been informed of AB 1485, its content, status and related implementation. The CDE will alert districts when the Plan amendment is approved and provide instruction on how to add Proposition 227 waiver classrooms with the approved alternate formats to their existing Reading First program.

The eligible waiver classrooms will receive the same support as other Reading First classrooms and in return they will be expected to meet all the requirements of Reading First, including using research-based strategies and materials and having children meet grade-level English-language arts standards by the end of third grade, as demonstrated by scoring proficient or above in English-language arts on the California Standards Tests (CSTs).

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All approved classrooms will be included in the local and state evaluations to determine future funding in years 3 - 6, so all classrooms are held to the same high expectations for improving students' reading skills and bringing all students to state standards as measured by our state assessment.

Eligible school districts currently not participating in the Reading First Program will have an opportunity to apply for such funding for the 2004-05 school year. It is anticipated that the application process for those grants will begin in early winter, with notification of successful grant applicant in spring 2004.

SBE Approves Foreign Language Primary Adoption

Concluding a multiyear process, the State Board of Education adopted the 2003 Foreign Language Primary Adoption instructional materials as recommended by the Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission.

At a meeting in September 2003, the Curriculum Commission held a public hearing to review the Language Expert/Instructional Material Advisory Panel Report of Findings, and took action on 20 programs submitted for adoption in five languages.

The Curriculum Commission recommended, and the State Board adopted, the following materials in grades 6-8: six programs for Spanish; three programs for Latin; three programs for French; and one program each for German and Japanese. In line with the Curriculum Commission's recommendation, the State Board rejected two K-8 Spanish programs, one K-5 Spanish program and one K-3 Spanish program. The Board found that submissions not adopted did not adequately meet the criteria for adoption taking into account the totality of the information received, including, but not limited to, the reasons presented by the Curriculum Commission.

The last adoption of K-8 foreign language instructional materials took place in 1991. In May 2000, the State Board took action to allow school districts to purchase materials from the 1991 list until a new adoption took place this year.

The 2003 adoption came within the State Board Adopted *Foreign Language Framework* (May 2001). The *Framework* is centered on the Language Learning Continuum that outlines instruction that is based on the level of students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Language Learning Continuum marks five stages for measuring student progress with each stage indicating a level of vocabulary, language structure, fluency, and comprehension. Language Learning Continuum stages are not grade level dependent but describe where students are in the acquisition of another language. The 2003 adopted programs are for various stages.

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Other Items of Interest

High Priority Schools: As recommended by Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, the State Board approved the award of 12 new implementation grants for schools participating in the High Priority Schools Program. Previously, the Board has approved 654 High Priority Schools to be funded in fiscal year 2002-03. Schools approved at the November Board meeting will receive \$720 per student for fiscal year 2003-04. Consistent with Senate Bill 18 (Chesbro, Chapter 4, Statutes of 2003-04 First Extraordinary Session) schools that participate in HPSGP received \$320 per student in fiscal year 2002-03 and will receive \$400 per student in 2003-04. The schools will subsequently be eligible to receive \$400 per student for fiscal year 2004-05, pending availability of funds in the 2004-05 Budget Act.

Charter Schools: The State Board approved a petition request by the Academy of Culture and Technology (ACT) to become a Charter School Under the Oversight of the State Board of Education. The State Board approved the petition by the Pomona Valley Center for Community Development to establish ACT for a three-year period, from July 1, 2005, through June 30, 2008. ACT was assigned charter number 608, subject to the petitioners (or their designees) satisfying several conditions, consistent with the recommendations of CDE staff and the Advisory Commission on Charter Schools. The State Board also approved the petition by Leadership Public Schools to establish the Leadership Public School – San Rafael (LPSSR). The petition was approved for a three-year period from July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2007. LPSSR was assigned charter number 609, subject to the petitioners (or their designees) satisfying certain conditions consistent with the recommendations of CDE staff and the Advisory Commission on Charter Schools.

SBE Legislative Priorities: The State Board approved six core principles to guide liaisons and staff in the pursuit of legislation. These principles include preserving the existing assessment system [including the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), and the California English Language Development Test (CELDT)]; maintaining the state's existing accountability system, making only those minor conforming changes necessary to comply with the No child Left Behind (NCLB) Act; to encourage more submission of instructional materials by publishers that will meet California's rigorous requirements; to safeguard the academic content standards as the foundation of California's K-12 educational system; to strengthen coordination between K-12 and higher education; and to encourage only high quality charter schools. President Hastings asked that members and staff consider alternative wording for the principle related to charter schools for review at the January 2004 meeting in hopes that unanimity of support for the core principles might be achieved.

For more information contact the State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Room 5111, Sacramento, CA 95814
Tel. 916.319.0827; Fax 916.319.0175
Web: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/board>